



To: Town Council

Fr: Paul Bockelman
Town Manager

Dt: September 13, 2020

Re: Community Safety in Amherst: Update for Town Council 09-14-20

Executive Summary

Establish a working group to recommend alternative options to providing services for community safety in Amherst.

Initiative: Town Council Vote

At its meeting on July 20, 2020, the Town Council voted that the Town Manager, in consultation with the Town Council and residents of Amherst, fully explore alternative options to providing services for community safety. The Town Manager is to present results to the Town Council by January 31, 2021. Two vacant police officer positions will not be filled until these results are delivered.

The goals of this vote were:

- To study the complex issues of delivering community safety issues – currently provided through the police department and other means – to ensure racial equity;
- To recommend reforms to the current organizational and oversight structures; and,
- To examine existing Town funding priorities.

The mission is to ensure that racial and social justice values are incorporated into our public safety services.

What: The Proposal

Study the issue of how the Town delivers community safety services through the Police Department and identify additional support services needed to meet the needs of the community. This work will, inevitably, lead to a broader discussion of the Town's relationship with existing social service partners and how best to utilize the Police Department and its role and accountability in the Town governance structure.

How: Community-centered/Data-focused

To have a vibrant and inclusive community, the people and communities most affected by issues need to be kept at the center of the discussion and decision-making process. It is important that this work lead with racial equity and focus on human-centered design.

The first step is to understand the nature of the problem the Town is seeking to fix. The national dialogue has focused on police brutality and racism. The goal for the Town should be to know with more precision what the specific issues in Amherst are from the perspective of people's personal experiences. We have heard from many people during Town Council meetings and through emails and phone calls. I have met privately one-on-one and with small groups, as has the Police Chief. We have also heard there are community members who do not feel comfortable attending any of the meetings offered so far.

Some of the questions we have begun to explore include:

- How are national issues surfacing in our community?
- Are different issues at play affecting different communities? Is there a problem with inappropriate use of force and intimidation by Amherst Police officers?
- Does policing in Amherst fall more heavily on Black residents and other people of color and people perceived as marginal?
- How would we know?

Utilizing a community-based research approach, that's both scientific and culturally-tailored utilizing grassroots organizing, the Town can learn how often people of different races and backgrounds have had interactions with Amherst police and how safe they feel in their immediate neighborhood, and in the Town in general. Effective survey tools are needed to reach a representative sample of Amherst residents that is enriched by BIPOC community members, marginalized individuals, and residents living in key geographic areas. This data could be assembled in an easily analyzable database.

Who: A Working Group, subject to Open Meeting Law, Ethics Law, etc.

I intend to establish a Community Safety Working Group to advise me on my January 31st report to the Town Council. This Working Group will have two distinct missions and deliverables as set forth below:

Purpose: The purpose of the Community Safety Working Group is to (a) make recommendations on alternative ways of providing public safety services to the community and (b) make recommendations on reforms to the current organizational and oversight structures of the Amherst Police Department.

The Working Group is charged with developing actionable, feasible, and fundable proposals or policies, sequenced and structured in a way that would produce the most impact to achieve the agreed-upon goals.

Membership: Nine members appointed by the Town Manager (per Charter 3.3.c). No fewer than six members who shall represent Black, Indigenous, People of Color, or other historically marginalized communities. The Police Chief or designee shall serve as an *ex officio*, non-voting member. The Working Group shall elect its own chair and vice-chair.

The Working Group should include members who have subject matter expertise; project management skills; human-centered design knowledge; community organizing experience; and/or be representative of impacted resident groups.

Term: Members shall be appointed for a term to end September 1, 2021.

Tasks: The Working Group will set a work plan to:

- Learn from previous work by the Town through previous studies and committees and efforts to move toward greater racial equity;
- Examine current public safety services and how they are delivered;
- Review policies, complaints, and current training practices including:
 - current policies and training practices;
 - complaints and response data, including location and context for reports;
 - a map of services available, matched up with complaint data and feedback from residents about what's needed to maintain community safety;
 - an overview of current emergency response operations, including resources invested and policies and protocols relevant to emergency dispatch;
- Explore models of resident oversight of police departments;
- Collect data from people's experiences in Amherst;
- Engage the communities most impacted by policing to develop alternatives and identify solutions to diagnosed problems;
- Investigate alternative models such as:
 - Eugene "Cahoots" - Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Street;
 - Albuquerque - Community Safety Alternative;
 - Denver STAR –Support Team Assisted Response.

Budget

The Working Group may propose to the Town Manager expenditures for research support and training. Such expenditures will be reported by the Town Manager to the Town Council.

When: Timeline and Deadlines

In order to meet the deadlines below, the Working Group needs to start work very soon. My goal is to enable the Town Council to vote to confirm my appointments no later than the Town Council meeting of October 19, 2020 so that the Working Group may begin meeting in late October.

The Working Group shall submit two deliverables to the Town Manager:

- Written report to the Town Manager by January 15, 2021 on alternative options to public safety services currently provided by the Amherst Police Department.
- Written report to the Town Manager by June 30, 2021 on recommendations for resident oversight and for policy reforms for the Amherst Police Department.

The Town Manager shall submit two deliverables to the Town Council:

- Written report to the Town Council by January 31, 2021 on alternative options to public safety services currently provided by the Amherst Police Department.
- Written report to the Town Council by July 30, 2021 on recommendations for resident oversight and policy reforms for the Amherst Police Department.

Appointment Process

This appointment process will be slightly different from other Town Manager appointments. For this appointment process, applicants will be asked to complete an online Community Activity Form (CAF)

plus a Statement of Interest (SOI). I will establish an Interview Team who will review the CAFs and SOIs prior to a private interview with the Interview Team. I will discuss the details of the interview process with the Interview Team, and ensure that applicants know what to expect at the interview. As with other Town Manager appointments, both CAFs and SOIs will be treated as personnel records, and will not be released to the Town Council or to the public.

I will invite the following individuals/groups to participate on the Interview Team: Keisha Dennis of the Residents' Advisory Committee; Matthew Charity, Chair of the Human Rights Commission; Sid Ferreira of the Human Rights Commission and the ABC House Resident Director; a BIPOC public safety employee of the Town or UMass who does not need to be an Amherst resident; an Amherst resident chosen by the Racial Equity Task Force; an Amherst resident chosen by the Defund 413 group; and an Amherst resident BIPOC consultant who has worked previously providing anti-racism training to Town or School employees.

My appointments to the Working Group will be submitted to Town Council for its consideration in the usual manner.

Additional Background

The Town Manager, Police Chief, Superintendent of Schools, and Chair of the Human Rights Commission along with the Amherst Police Supervisors Union and Amherst Police Patrol Union issued a Joint Statement on May 31, 2020 after the killing of Mr. George Floyd (attached).

The Town Council issued a Resolution in the Aftermath of the Killing of Mr. George Floyd on June 1, 2020 (attached).

I have consulted with the Town Council with a presentation and commentary at its meeting on August 3, 2020. A copy of the presentation may be found here:

<https://www.amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/52365/7a-Community-Safety-in-Amherst-08-03-2020-FINAL>

In this August 3rd presentation, I identified the mission as having three purposes:

- Study the complex issues of delivering community safety services –currently provided through the police department and other means –to ensure racial equity;
- Recommend reforms to the current organizational and oversight structures;
- Examine existing Town funding priorities.

I suggested that the Town could explore alternative options by:

- Learning from previous work by the Town;
- Examining current Public Safety services and how they are delivered;
- Including policies, complaints, training, resident oversight models;
- Collecting data from people's experiences in Amherst;
- Investigating alternative models such as:
 - Eugene “Cahoots” -Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Street;
 - Albuquerque - Community Safety Alternative;
 - Denver STAR –Support Team Assisted Response.

The conclusion of this August 3rd presentation suggested the establishment of a working group or groups to carry out these tasks.

This memorandum focuses on the immediate, time-sensitive need to report back to the Town Council by January 31st.

In preparing this memorandum and charge, I have heard from members of the Town Council, had discussions with a member of the Racial Equity Task Force, met with the Defund 413 group, connected with the League of Women Voters, and reached out to over 40 members of the BIPOC community and allies. Many of these people have responded and shared their thoughts with me and suggested others to whom I should reach out.

I also met with consultants from Bennett Midland (<https://bennettmidland.com/>), a New York based consulting firm (with a local connection) that specializes in government and non-profit work and has done extensive work with other municipalities reviewing police practices and procedures.

I appreciate the time and energy all have offered and I look forward to their continued involvement.

TOWN OF AMHERST

DRAFT

Community Safety Working Group

Name:	Community Safety Working Group
Type:	Ad Hoc Time Limited
Legal Reference:	Charter Section 3.2, Committees created by the Manager
Appointing Authority:	Town Manager in accordance with Charter Section 3.3.c
Number of Voting Members:	Nine (9)
Number of Non-Voting Members:	One (1)
Term of Appointment:	All appointments expire September 1, 2021
Special Municipal Employees:	(if voted by Town Council)
Staff Support:	Town Manager or designee

Composition:

Nine voting members

- No fewer than six of the nine voting members shall represent Black, Indigenous, People of Color, or other historically marginalized communities.
- The Police Chief or designee shall serve as an *ex officio*, non-voting member.
- The Working Group shall elect its own chair and vice-chair.

Purpose:

The purpose of the Community Safety Working Group is to (a) make recommendations on alternative ways of providing public safety services to the community and (b) make recommendations on reforms to the current organizational and oversight structures of the Amherst Police Department.

Charge:

The Working Group shall:

- Study the complex issues of delivering community safety services – currently provided through the police department and other means –to ensure racial equity;
- Recommend reforms to the current organizational and oversight structures;
- Examine existing Town funding priorities for delivering community safety services.

The Working Group can achieve this by:

- Learning from previous work by the Town through previous studies and committees;
- Examining current public safety services and how they are delivered;
- Reviewing policies, complaints, and current training practices;
- Exploring models of resident oversight of police departments;
- Collecting data from people’s experiences in Amherst;
- Engaging the communities most impacted by policing to develop alternatives and identify solutions to diagnosed problems;
- Investigating alternative models such as:
 - Eugene “Cahoots” - Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Street;
 - Albuquerque - Community Safety Alternative;
 - Denver STAR –Support Team Assisted Response.

Reports:

- Written report to the Town Manager by January 15, 2021 on alternative options to public safety services currently provided by the Amherst Police Department.
- Written report to the Town Manager by June 30, 2021 on recommendations for resident oversight and for policy reforms for the Amherst Police Department.

Action: N/A

Charge Adopted: [date]

Charge Revised: [date]

SME Status Voted: [date]



Joint Statement by Town of Amherst

Town Manager Chief of Police Superintendent of Schools

Chair of Human Rights Commission

Amherst Police Supervisors Union Amherst Police Patrol Officers Union

May 31, 2020

We are haunted by the searing vision of a Minneapolis police officer kneeling on a subdued man's neck, as other officers watched the man die. We witnessed Mr. George Floyd's pleas for help be ignored by the very people who are trained to help and assist. We are haunted, too, by the knowledge that this was not an isolated incident in our country. The number of names and similar experiences is unconscionably long, and an undeniable part of the history of this nation.

First, we extend our collective condolences to Mr. Floyd's family and friends and to all who grieve his death. We offer our thoughts to the countless members of our community who have been personally impacted as well.

Second, we condemn the actions of the police officers involved. The Amherst Town Manager, Police Chief, and School Superintendent have joined with the chair of the Human Rights Commission and the leadership of the Town's two police unions – the Amherst Police Patrol Officers Union and Amherst Police Supervisors Union - to denounce in the strongest possible terms the actions and inactions by these police officers that resulted in Mr. Floyd's death.

Third, we feel compelled to say affirmatively and with real compassion that violence like this is yet another blow to black and brown people—particularly African-American men—who too often are told by our culture that they do not matter. It confirms the lived experience of black men – nationwide and, yes, in our own community. This is a wrong that needs to be righted, and white Americans need to join those who have been carrying this burden, and do the heaviest lifting to right it.

As public officials, this tragedy makes us reflect on our own practices, behavior, and attitudes. We question whether we are doing enough, are we vigilant enough, have we fostered a true culture of respect and honesty? We strive to remain ever thoughtful in our work – as public officials and police officers – to ensure that all members of our community feel part of Amherst

and feel protected, listened to, and served by their public servants. We try to do this through training, listening, and learning, and by maintaining an attitude of humility and service.

As public officials, it is our duty to use our legal and moral authority to protect all members of our community no matter their race or color or where they fall on the power spectrum. It is our duty to foster a community free of fear, intimidation and violence – a community in which people are not targeted or hurt unnecessarily by law enforcement – and provide equal protection under the law.

We know we can do better as a country to confront the systemic racism that has brought us to this place of fear and distrust. We can advocate for the criminal justice system to take a firm stand against officers who use excessive force. Those of us who are white can demonstrate that protecting and promoting the rights of black and brown people in our community is integral to securing the well-being of our entire community.

We know many of the young people in our community have seen this video and other similar news, and are trying to process these traumatizing events with their families. However, the current public health situation makes it that much more difficult as they are unable to connect with friends, extended family, or school staff in-person. As such, Amherst Regional Public School counselors and Family Center staff will be available to support students in the coming days and weeks.

In the aftermath of this tragedy, we reaffirm our commitment to the larger goals of social justice and will focus on how we can deliver on the promise of good and fair public safety protection. Police and Town leadership will be meeting with community groups during the week. We welcome your thoughts and suggestions and are prepared to listen. We will work with our community leaders to determine the best ways for us to engage on this important mission as we continue to move forward.

Paul Bockelman
Town Manager

Scott Livingstone
Chief of Police

Dr. Michael Morris
Superintendent of Schools

Matthew Charity
Chair, Human Rights Commission

Amherst Police Patrol Officers Union

Amherst Police Supervisors Union

Town of Amherst

Town Council

Resolution in the Aftermath of the Death of Mr. George Floyd

Whereas, we are haunted by the searing vision of a Minneapolis police officer kneeling on a subdued man's neck, as other officers witnessed Mr. George Floyd's pleas for help be ignored by the very people who are trained to help and assist.

Whereas, we are haunted, too, by the knowledge that this was not an isolated incident in our country. The number of names and similar experiences is unconscionably long, and an undeniable part of the history of this nation.

Whereas, we extend our condolences to Mr. Floyd's family and friends and to all who grieve his death. We offer our thoughts to the countless members of our community who have been personally impacted as well.

Whereas, we condemn the actions of the police officers involved.

Whereas, we feel compelled to say affirmatively and with real compassion that violence like this is yet another blow to black and brown people—particularly African-American men—who too often are told by our culture that they do not matter. It confirms the lived experience of black men –nationwide and, yes, in our own community. This is a wrong that needs to be righted, and white Americans need to join those who have been carrying this burden, and do the heaviest lifting to right it.

Whereas, as public officials, this tragedy makes us reflect on our own practices, behavior, and attitudes. We question whether we are doing enough, are we vigilant enough, have we fostered a true culture of respect and honesty? We strive to remain ever thoughtful in our work –as public officials—to ensure that all members of our community feel part of Amherst and feel protected, listened to, and served by their public servants.

Whereas, as public officials, it is our duty to use our legal and moral authority to protect all members of our community no matter their race or color or where they fall on the power spectrum. It is our duty to foster a community free of fear, intimidation and violence –a community in which people are not targeted or hurt unnecessarily by law enforcement –and provide equal protection under the law.

Whereas, we know we can do better as a country to confront the systemic racism that has brought us to this place of fear and distrust. We can advocate for the criminal justice system to take a firm stand against officers who use excessive force. Those of us who are white can demonstrate that

protecting and promoting the rights of black and brown people in our community is integral to securing the well-being of our entire community.

Whereas, we know many of the young people in our community have seen this video and other similar news, and are trying to process these traumatizing events with their families. However, the current public health situation makes it that much more difficult as they are unable to connect with friends, extended family, or school staff in-person.

Whereas, in the aftermath of this tragedy, we reaffirm our commitment to the larger goals of social justice and will focus on how we can deliver on the promise of good and fair public safety protection. We will work with our community leaders to determine the best ways for us to engage on this important mission as we continue to move forward.

Now, therefore, the Amherst Town Council joins the Amherst Town Manager, Police Chief, and School Superintendent, the chair of the Human Rights Commission, and the full support of our Police Unions to denounce in the strongest possible terms the actions and inactions by these police officers that resulted in Mr. Floyd's death.

Voted this 1st day of June 2020. On behalf of the Town Council